



U.S Representative

***Bernie Sanders***

A Focus On Environmental Issues



Spring 1998



Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515

DEAR FELLOW VERMONTER:

As you probably know, our environmental problems and challenges — both globally and locally — continue to grow. On a global scale, rapid deforestation and the increased output of harmful greenhouse gasses have combined to create a major global warming crisis. In our beautiful state, among other issues, increasing sprawl development has resulted in significant challenges for those of us who wish to preserve Vermont's unique and rural character.

At the global level, I am playing an active role in fighting international monetary and trade policies that have major negative impacts on the global environment. In the name of "free trade" and "open markets," multinational corporations are pressuring unelected trade bodies and countries around the world to lower environmental standards so that they can enjoy huge profits from the exploitative extraction and export of natural resources.

Here at home, the Majority leadership in Congress continues to push an anti-environmental agenda that threatens our forests, our air, our public lands and parks, our wildlife and our downtowns. In my view, one of the most dangerous aspects of this agenda is the attempt to usurp the rights of local government. Last fall, for example, the House passed the Private Property Rights Implementation Act — the last remaining vestige of the House Leadership's Contract With America — which would prevent neighborhoods and local communities from controlling their own destinies by threatening to substitute the judgment of federal judges for local zoning officials. I opposed that bill and other efforts which would allow federal preemption of state and local land use laws which are designed to protect the environment - including an effort to override the ability of local communities to regulate the construction of telecommunications towers.

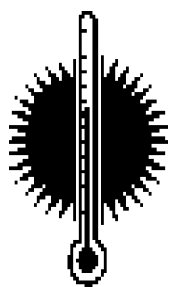
I also remain very concerned about the connection between environmental degradation and human health. It is no secret that the contamination of our food, water and air is often a cause of serious health problems. On that note, I would like to take this opportunity to invite you to a statewide conference that I am hosting on this important issue: ***"Integrating Approaches to Health: Personal, Social, and Environmental," to be held on Saturday, May 23, 1998, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at Norwich University in Northfield, Vermont.*** I expect many lively and informative discussions, led by leading experts in the fields of environmental and alternative health. For more information about this conference, please call my Burlington office, toll-free, at 1-800-339-9834.

I know how important environmental protection is to the people of Vermont and am proud to have one of the strongest pro-environment voting records in Congress. Together with like-minded Members of Congress, I will continue my efforts to make certain that the state, nation and planet that we leave to our children is clean and healthy.

Sincerely,

Bernard Sanders  
Member of Congress

## MAJOR ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES



**Global Warming** - Make no mistake, this is a genuine, proven environmental threat. Scientists calculate that, if current practices continue, the U.S. will emit 30 percent more pollution by 2008 than it did in 1990. By 2100, the Earth's average surface temperature will likely rise 2 to 6 degrees Fahrenheit, resulting in rising seas, severe droughts, heat waves, savage storms and flooding. The Kyoto Climate Change Accord, written in December, 1997, establishes an institutional framework for dealing with this threat. Industrialized nations would reduce greenhouse gas emissions by about 5 percent overall between 2008 and 2012. The Accord will take effect after ratification by 55 nations, which account for at least 55 percent of the 1990 carbon dioxide emissions. The Accord is already being debated here, and it must be approved by two-thirds of the Senate to be ratified by the U.S.



**Clean Air Act Regulations** - After extensive scientific findings on the connection between air quality and health, the EPA last summer promulgated new ambient air quality standards for particulate matter and ozone. I supported these new standards, which are to be fully implemented over the next 10 years.



**Mercury Pollution** - EPA's long-awaited Mercury Report was finally released in mid-December - four years late. This is the most comprehensive review ever done on mercury sources, exposure, health effects, management and risks to humans and wildlife, but I remain concerned it does not contain adequate fish consumption advisories for at-risk populations, like young children, pregnant women and people who depend upon fish for a large portion of their diets. Some believe this report's release was delayed by pressure from utilities and the seafood industry. I introduced a Sense of the Congress Resolution (H.Con.Res. 91) with 32 House members, demanding EPA release the report.



**National Forests** - The General Accounting Office recently reported millions of dollars of lost revenue from our national forests because of destructive, below-cost timber sales. The 1995 Salvage Rider, passed under the guise of "forest health," created serious environmental problems in many western forests. I am also concerned about road-building in national forests, which costs taxpayers and disturbs vital ecosystems. I support the proposed 18-month moratorium on road building in our national forests to give us time to assess the best way to reduce such wasteful practices.



**Transportation Bill** - On April 1, the House passed, with my support, the BESTEA (for Building Efficient Surface Transportation and Equity Act) bill, which reauthorized federal transportation programs. BESTEA was strongly supported by environmental organizations for its emphasis on environmental protection and alternative transportation. BESTEA significantly increases funding for the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality program and strengthens the Transportation Enhancements program by increasing funding and adding several worthy transportation enhancement activities. The bill also reauthorizes the Recreational Trails and Scenic Byways programs.

### SITING OF COMMUNICATION TOWERS SHOULD BE A LOCAL DECISION

Vermont is leading the nation in opposing efforts by the telecommunications industry to challenge local control over land use. The 1996 Telecommunications Act, which I opposed, created a loophole that gives wireless telecommunications companies the power to attack local land-use laws when they want to erect towers to carry their signals, often over residents' opposition.

Vermont law gives communities the final say as to where new towers go up, and we should not allow the federal government to pre-empt local control and allow telecommunications companies to put up towers wherever they wish. That would be both an insult to local residents and an environmental calamity threatening the very character of our state.



My office organized a public meeting on this issue in Montpelier, and the entire Congressional delegation attended a meeting in Hardwick with Federal Communications Commission Chairman William Kennard. At that meeting, Kennard told us he supported local control and would do his best to see that the rule that is passed by the FCC respects and protects our communities. Nonetheless, I have introduced legislation in the House of Representatives to return siting authority to the local level, and I will remain vigilant on this issue until it is satisfactorily resolved.

# THE GLOBAL ECONOMY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Our Earth's environment has continued to decline over the last 10 years, and the actions of multinational corporations often play a major role in this degradation.

For example, DuPont is a leading producer of chemicals harmful to the ozone layer and that contribute to global warming. Huge global mining, smelting and refining interests are major polluters, and multinational timber companies play a significant role in deforestation around the globe.

While these corporate giants often seem to be beyond accountability, we can and must shape public policy to control their actions and make environmental protection a top consideration. I have been working to do just that.

For example, environmental concerns must be a key part of the ongoing debate over the proposed \$18 billion funding package for the International Monetary Fund (IMF). This package is part of the overall bailout for giant banks and global investors who made long-odds bets in Asia and lost. I don't think this is good policy, and I also think we must not overlook the role the IMF's practices have played in damaging our environment.

The IMF generally focuses on "free trade" and economic growth based on exports, and when it makes loans to Third World countries, they are often forced to accelerate the extraction of natural resources to increase exports, leading to environmental destruction. IMF's policies compound the problem by forcing severe budget restraints on recipient governments, which lead to cuts in environmental protection agencies, which means less enforcement to restrain corporations.

I have played a major role in opposing the IMF funding package, and I have worked hard to expose the harmful environmental effect of the IMF's policies. I have passed legislation that would require the IMF to amend its bylaws to require investors and banks to absorb a significant amount of their losses before American taxpayers contribute one dime. We should stop subsidizing corporate polluters.

Trade policy is another area that has a major impact on the global environment. Last year, President Clinton and the Congressional Republicans teamed up to try to push through "fast track" trade legislation that would give the Administration carte blanche to negotiate trade agreements, with no input or oversight from Congress. This would lead to more trade agreements, like the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which encourage corporations to move operations to countries where labor is cheap and environmental protection weak.

I helped defeat "fast track," which was also opposed by every major environmental organization. NAFTA's awful

environmental record speaks for itself. Pollution in Mexico has increased since 1994, when NAFTA was signed, and that compromises the safety of our food supply, since many of our foods come from Mexico. NAFTA also requires us to respect the lax health and safety standards in Mexico, and since only about one percent of Mexican food shipments at our border are inspected, NAFTA means potentially unsafe foods are now flowing into the U.S.




I introduced HR 1079, the Fast-Track Fairness and Accountability Act, to prohibit the President from signing a trade agreement unless every other signatory agrees to adopt laws promoting internationally-recognized environmental standards. HR 1079 is supported by more than 60 House members.

Another threat to environmental protection is the World Trade Organization (WTO), which views environmental and consumer protections as obstacles to "free trade" and seeks to strike down such laws. The WTO, of which the U.S. is a member, has ruled against American regulations on clean air and reformulated gasoline, against consumer protections - forcing the U.S. to lower standards for dolphin-safe tuna - and against a provision in the Endangered Species Act requiring shrimp sold here to be caught using turtle-excluder devices. The WTO also undermines government procurement standards, such as "buy American" or "buy local" laws, and it could even be used to overturn the Northeast Dairy Compact, which regulates milk prices for our family farms. When it comes to the environment, the WTO is bad news.

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**IN THIS ISSUE...**

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**WITH EVERY BREATH YOU TAKE . . . . .**  
**Indoor air pollution is a serious problem and needs more research**

Indoor air pollution is a major health problem in our state and our country, and the Consumer Federation of America estimates health care costs associated with indoor air pollution reach \$100 billion annually. Carpets, air conditioners, mold, paint and cleaning agents can all pollute the indoor air we breathe. The situation has become more serious in recent years since many buildings are now “tighter” than was previously the case, and have less fresh air coming in.

Our children are particularly vulnerable. In 1993, my office surveyed the indoor air quality in Vermont’s schools and discovered more than half of the responding schools reported problems. I have requested a General Accounting Office (GAO) study to determine how EPA and state agencies have addressed this problem. This study will examine nine Vermont schools and six state-owned office buildings. I expect the study to be completed this month and, based on the results, I plan to introduce legislation to address this issue. Indoor air pollution is a major health concern, and we need strong state, federal and local cooperation to address it.

**Phone Numbers of Interest To Vermonters**

For information and updates concerning the work I am doing in Congress as well as town meetings and conferences I will be holding in Vermont, visit my Web Page on the Internet at: [www.house.gov/bernie](http://www.house.gov/bernie)

- \* U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY..... 202-260-4977
- \* VERMONT AGENCY OF NATURAL RESOURCES..... 802-241-3600
- \* VERMONT DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE..... 802-828-2500
- \* VERMONT DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION..... 802-241-3800
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- \*VERMONT DEPARTMENT OF FORESTS, PARKS & RECREATION..... 802-241-3650